

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Masato Sugihara

Masato Sugihara, son of immigrants Zenkichi and Taki Sugihara, was born on November 14, 1911. One of four boys in the family, he grew up in Sing Loy Lane located off Pālama Street.

As a youth he participated in the recreational activities offered at nearby Pālama Settlement.

He attended neighborhood schools and graduated from McKinley High School in 1930. He graduated from the University of Hawai'i in 1935 with a degree in agriculture.

He had a lengthy public school teaching career, including stays at Kekaha, Kalākaua Intermediate, Castle High, and Farrington High. He left Farrington High School in 1965.

Between 1965 and 1969 Sugihara was a G-3 training officer for the Hawai'i National Guard.

A 442nd Regimental Combat Team and Military Intelligence Service veteran, Sugihara is now retired. He and his late wife, Helene, raised a son and a daughter. They have four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Tape No. 27-48-1-98

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Masato Sugihara (MS)

Liliha, O'ahu

April 6, 1998

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Masato Sugihara for the Pālama Settlement oral history project on April 6, 1998, and we're at the Lanakila Senior Center in Honolulu, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

First of all, why don't you tell me when and where you were born?

MS: I was born where you find the corner of King and Beretania [streets]. And on the King Street side, you find O'ahu Railway [& Land Co.] station over there. Just going towards Kalihi on King Street on the left side was an old building, not the present building, but there was another old building there. My father had a hardware shop over there. Lumber, nails, paint, and so on, because he was a contractor. And I lived in that area, back of the store. Yeah, and that's where I was born.

WN: What was your father's name?

MS: My father's name? Zenkichi Sugihara.

WN: Zenkichi. And then what was the name of his business?

MS: There was no name in particular. Sugihara, I guess. Not even "Sugihara Contracting Company," just "Sugihara." And remember, those days, wasn't automobile, you know. They were all horse-drawn vehicles to move the equipment and so on. This was way back in 19—I was born [November 14,] 1911, so I would say that was roughly, as far back as I can recall, would be about 1915, yeah? Maybe that time. That was that area. And not far from there, going towards Kalihi again, where you have your Dillingham Boulevard starting, was your old Pālama Settlement.

WN: Was Dillingham Boulevard there back then?

MS: No, it wasn't there at that time. No, in fact, that area, there was a road over there, but it wasn't Dillingham Boulevard at that time. And of course, they were just dredging the [Kapālama] Canal I think and they were using the coral to fill up all of that land where [Honolulu] Community College is [today]. Because where the community college is was the old Honolulu Vocational School. And just beyond that there was just more coral. Because

when they built that canal over there, Kapālama Canal, we used to go crabbing over there. And if I recall correctly, that land was all white coral that was dug up from the ocean. Oh, that's where I was born, that's where I was raised.

WN: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

MS: There were four boys in our family and the oldest one was twenty years older than I am. And the one above me was ten years older than I was. My younger brother was two years younger than me. We may have had some sisters in between, but to my knowledge, that was it.

WN: I see.

MS: I think, if I'm not mistaken, my mother once said that the sisters died long before we were born. So there were just four boys.

WN: And what is your mother's name?

MS: Taki. T-A-K-I.

WN: Her maiden name, do you know?

MS: Gee, I'm not too sure what her maiden name was. Of course, my uncle's name was Uyeda and she supposedly was the sister of this uncle. Could be her name was Uyeda, but I always thought it was Uyeda, but somebody told me, no, it was some other name.

WN: Maybe your uncle was a *yōshi* or something.

MS: It could be, the way they did things in Japan, yeah? So it could be.

WN: And then what did your mother do?

MS: Both my mother and father came together to work on the [sugar] plantation. They finished their [labor] contract on the island of Kaua'i in three years and from Kaua'i, they moved to Honolulu. While they were on Kaua'i, she started off working out in the fields also, but since there were so many bachelor Japanese, they prevailed upon her to quit working on the plantation, and do their laundry and cooking for them. So that's what she did the bulk of the time that she was there. But after they moved from Kaua'i to Honolulu, she became a housewife.

WN: What part of Japan are your mother and father from?

MS: Hiroshima.

WN: Hiroshima. So by the time you were born, your father folks were finished with Kaua'i and living in . . .

MS: Oh yeah, long time before that, because if I'm not mistaken, my older brothers were born in Honolulu also. My oldest brother went to St. Louis College.

WN: So growing up over there, what did you do to have fun? I know you told me you did crabbing. But what was it like growing up in that area?

MS: Growing up in that area?

WN: Yeah.

MS: Oh, we had to do our own, we had to improvise our own games. Those days, we had that marbles and agates that they have here, but the kids today, they only look at those things. But we used to shoot those things, you know? And they had games, we had a circle and everybody would put in the center so many agates. And then you would play and hit and the more you take out, the more win. So in a way it was sort of a gambling game over there. (WN chuckles.) Then we had another game with marbles. We had five holes, one, two, one in the center, three, four. And you had to shoot and get into the hole and progressively go from one to another and then come in. And again, you would be betting on that. Well, that's one kind of game.

Then we had tops. But our tops were made of wood and we had nails. And in our case, we changed the commercial nail with bigger nails. We made them longer. Because the idea was when you played, you try to hit the other person's top and the nail would be sharp and just take pieces of the top. (WN laughs.) Yeah, those were the kind of games we played.

We also played what was called *pee-wee*. We got broomsticks. And the broomstick, the one you handled, would be about oh, fourteen, fifteen inches. The others would be about four or five inches. One end would be slanted. You put it down on the ground, hit the slanted end, thing would pop up, hit, hit, and then whack it away.

WN: After you whack it, what happens?

MS: It falls, and see how many times you can hit it up and then whack it before that. Then we had another dangerous game, *alavia*. Those days, the menfolks smoked Durham [tobacco]. The bags, we filled it up with wet sawdust, tie it tight, and you have groups, maybe two or three in each group. You had one ball each, and the idea is to hit the opponent with the thing. You chase them and then hit. And sometimes it get real rough because those balls were made so tight and hard. They're really hard, you know. But that was *alavia*. Games like that.

We did our own scrounging for food. Mountain apple season, we would go up Kalihi Valley or Nu'uanu Valley and pick mountain apples. Then certain seasons, you had rose apple. That yellow fruit. Hollow inside. The only thing is that worms used to [get to] them, so you had to be careful how you ate those things. In those days, this area used to be the insane asylum, yeah?

WN: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

MS: Yeah, and then the mountains had lot of cactus. We used to even eat the cactus.

WN: What part did you eat?

MS: See, you had to be smart. You get two pieces of stick, sharpen the ends, poke it in where you

don't have that fine, hairy thorn, you know? Hold it down, you get a knife and then cut in between. Pull it apart and inside has a red meat with lot of seeds. But that wasn't too good, but still it was something that we had done.

WN: What was it like? Sweet or. . . What kind of taste was it?

MS: It was sweet all right, but with all the seeds in there, it wasn't worth the time and the trouble to do that. And the danger of getting the thorn into you, yeah? So. Well, those are the kind of games that we used to do. Also, to earn money, we used to go and pick *kiawe* beans. You know that burlap bag? One whole burlap bag, we sell it to the people that had horses for ten cents a bag. But way back in 1920s, ten cents for us was a lot of money.

WN: This area had lot of *kiawe* trees?

MS: Oh, especially that Iwilei area. Near the seashore, yeah? Near the ocean area, over there had lot of *kiawe*. And we used to make our own wagons. You know, the small wheels? You get a one-by-twelve by maybe five feet. And then you get a two-by-four. Then you get your wheel from the bicycles and put the wheel there, and in the front you had another two-by-four with another one, with a big hole inside that would turn. And we used that to go and haul the beans and things like that.

WN: So ten cents a bag. How long would it take you to fill up one bag?

MS: Oh yeah, *kiawe* [beans]. Well, it took---we didn't have any other tool, we had to hand pick them. But the beans were so plentiful that we just pick, pick. And usually we picked about four or five bag full and brought it back. So if two of us went, then it would be worth twenty-five cents each. It was fun for us because nothing else to do.

WN: Who were your friends around that area?

MS: At that time?

WN: Mm hmm.

MS: Well, when my father had that property on King Street, and when he was a contractor, he hired quite a few of the people that came from the same district in Japan. And they lived in that camp over there. So the children over there who grew up together, and I would say there were, let's see, Miwa family, Taniguchi family, Ueoka. And they had boys our age too, see? In that neighborhood, all the area surrounding that, we had quite a few people.

WN: Was it mostly Japanese living around there?

MS: In our area, it was more Japanese. Where that Mayor Wright [Homes] housing and then there's another housing this side, right opposite that, there was a lane and that lane led to a shrine. Temple. So you see, it indicates that there were quite a few Japanese people there. Then if you went more towards Kalihi, you came to Liliha Street and you go up Liliha Street, you found a mixture of other racial groups here, Filipino, so on.

WN: So at that time when you were growing up over there, besides your father's business, what

other businesses were in that area?

MS: Well, that area, right opposite the railroad station, King Street, the railroad station, Iwilei, right across the railroad station was the 'A'ala Market. The market over there. And I recall one store---oh, there was a hardware store—Iwa—I forget the name [Iwahara Shōten], but they were Japanese hardware store and they sold all kind of tools. Saws, hammer and nails, so on. And then they had a Chinese shop where they made clothing for sailors. You know, that dungaree with the wide bottom and stuff like that. And they made special sailor hat. (WN laughs.) They made the special sailor hat, you know, the white one, like that?

WN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MS: And that's the one later on, we used to buy to use to play football. We didn't have any equipment, so we bought that sailor hat and turned it down to cover our ears.

(Laughter)

MS: And that's what we used for our helmet.

All right, then the fish market over there and along the fish market you had lot of stores over there. Then, if this is Iwilei and this is King, your railroad station over here, across here, they had lot of small shops. I remember one shop, Chinese herb medicine. I remember that one. And they had couple of other shops, the restaurants, so on. And on the other side, now, this is King and this is Beretania, the corner. This corner, if I'm not mistaken, they had a furniture store, and upstairs they had living quarters for rental, like that.

WN: Is that Asahi Furniture?

MS: Was it Asahi Furniture? Gee, I'm not sure, yeah?

WN: Are you talking about that building across from 'A'ala Park?

MS: It's not there anymore.

WN: Yeah. Right.

MS: Yeah. That was it.

WN: What was it called? The 'A'ala Rengō?

MS: Was that what it is? Well, they had, in that area, they had two movie houses. More for Japanese movies. But those days, Japanese movies, black and white, it wasn't sound, so they had what they called *benshi*. They run the movies and then this guy would relay what's happening and all that. They had things like that. Well, as I said, across our place was a temple. There was a bakery and then next to the bakery, there was a public bathhouse. Because lot of the people didn't have their own *furo*, so they had the public bathhouse over there. Then they had other stores. Most of these buildings were two stories and the upstairs were used for homes or rental units. That's how it was over there. So that's how we lived.

WN: So like Otani Fish Market was around there, yeah?

MS: But Otani came later, much, much later. Oh, wait a while now, it could have been there. You know why? The 'A'ala Market, that's where we went to pick up the *aku* head and fish intestines to go crabbing. Yeah, that's right, that's right.

WN: So had like, Iwahara Shōten, yeah?

MS: Yeah, that's the one, Iwahara was there.

WN: Hardware, you said?

MS: Yeah, that one.

WN: You remember Aloha Curio?

MS: No, I'm not familiar with that. Then 'A'ala Park used to be—this is election year—'A'ala Park, during election year, would be the scene of all the politicians coming and then they had their chance to talk. Over there. Then, over there too, was interesting. They don't have it now, but in the old days, the Filipino people loved to play *sipa sipa*. And 'A'ala Park, every Sunday, there you see them over there. Oh, it was interesting. They go like this and they kick it.

WN: In the air?

MS: Yeah. That bamboo ball, yeah? Well, that's what it is, growing up in Pālama.

WN: Well, you said earlier, you played football. Barefoot football.

MS: Yeah.

WN: Yeah. So where did you folks play?

MS: Well, see, elementary school was up until eighth grade those days, not to the sixth grade. So one team that I played for was Nishikiya.

WN: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

MS: Yeah? And that was only 120-pound. Then we practiced at Ka'iulani School. Then after you graduated from the 120, Nishikiya couldn't afford to go into the 130[-pound league], so either you quit or you played for Pālama [Settlement]. Because Pālama had 120, 130, 135, and 150-pound teams. So I played for Pālama with the 130 or 135. I don't recall which one it was. One of them. I think it was 135, you know. So the opposing teams were all, Kalihi was the main rival, yeah?

WN: Oh, [Kalihi] Thundering Herd?

MS: Thundering Herd, yeah, yeah.

WN: You know this Nishikiya team? It was sponsored by someone?

MS: No. Nobody sponsored that. It just pick up teams because we didn't have baseball team. I guess it's just the, where the boys assembled. So we had Nishikiya, Desha Lane, and on Liliha Street, there was a family, Mamiya family, and the boys were good ball players. I think the older ones played for Asahi baseball team. They had their own team too. And one of them was our age, maybe one or two years older, Iwa Mamiya. Oh, that guy was really good in baseball.

WN: This is related to the Richard Mamiya family?

MS: I don't know. I have no idea what the relation is. So Nishikiya boys just got together. No sponsor. But there was a store over there. Motoda Store.

WN: Motoda?

MS: Motoda, yeah. A small store, but they manufactured tofu too, see? And the boys used to gather over there because right next to it was a pool hall. And when the boys got little older, they used to play pool, but they didn't have money so they didn't play too often. But when football season came or baseball season came, nobody actually sponsored.

Up a little ways, going towards 'Ewa was the Pālama Theatre. There was a drugstore/soda fountain. The man and wife, Okada, they owned it. And we didn't have money to go for ice cream sundaes or stuff, but we did go for cones and stuff like that over there. He was helpful, but not to that extent to sponsor, yeah? So we didn't have sponsors. And then Motoda Store, pool hall, and there was an *o-kazu-ya*. And that boy was a good ball player too. Football, and he played 120-pound league. He was the richest one because he was the only son. And when he was quite young yet, high school, the father folks bought him a car. But he worked in the store to help. So when we needed something, he was willing to, well, maybe buy baseball or something like that. So that's the way it was.

WN: So when you played barefoot football, you said you wore caps on your head. What else did you wear?

MS: That's all we had. We also tried to get long-sleeved shirts. And then long pants, but that's the only way we could, that's the only thing we had, those days, protective equipment.

WN: So Kalihi Thundering Herd, who else did you folks play?

MS: Nishikiya, we didn't play with them. Nishikiya, we played against Pālama, the 120-pound. We played against Pāwa'a, not Pauoa, but Pāwa'a.

WN: Pāwa'a?

MS: Yeah. Pāwa'a, they had. Not too many teams, yeah?

WN: Kaka'ako?

MS: Kaka'ako had one too, but. . . . You see, transportation was the problem. We didn't have transportation. So it was really hard. Usually we played at Pālama, yeah? And they organized

120-pound [league].

WN: So where did you play your games?

MS: We played at Pālama. We practiced at Ka'iulani [School], but Ka'iulani wasn't big enough to play, so we played at Pālama.

WN: Pālama Settlement?

MS: I remember playing in the 135[-pound team] at McKinley. But then the 135 [at Pālama Settlement] was better organized. They had, like Pālama had transportation for us, yeah?

WN: So this is the Pālama Settlement team?

MS: Yeah, Pālama Settlement team.

WN: So tell me something about the [original] Pālama Settlement right by your house on the corner of King and [Liliha] . . .

MS: What about it?

WN: Yeah, what do you remember about it? What was it like? What did they have?

MS: They didn't have the equipment that they had later on when they moved up to this other area, because all they had was that field over there. And that field wasn't half as big as the field that they had down here. And you could play maybe touch football, but they cannot play baseball because it was so narrow. You could run around in there and probably that's what they used for kindergarten. And the swimming tank was underneath the house. I mean the basement, yeah? I think it was twenty or twenty-five yards too, you know.

WN: Oh, was indoor?

MS: Huh?

WN: Was an indoor pool?

MS: Yeah, indoor.

WN: Oh yeah?

MS: Yeah, you go in and the living quarters were upstairs and then the pool was down below. So we hardly got any chance to go swimming in there because no shower facilities or things like that.

WN: Oh.

MS: Yeah. Was difficult. So we played over there, especially in our case, so close.

WN: Did you folks have to pay any dues?

MS: They didn't have clubs or anything of that nature. I think it was more of a, what you would say? Welfare type? Not welfare, because they didn't have welfare, but I think was sponsored by some church group from New England or something. [See Introduction to these volumes for brief history of Pālama Settlement.]

WN: Originally, yeah?

MS: Yeah. So, and that's what it was. Of course, they didn't have any organized thing like they had over here where they have classes and things like that.

WN: I was wondering, you know, your friends or people that lived in the camp and so on, what kind of work did they do? Besides the contractors who had been working for your father. What other jobs were there? That the kids . . .

MS: Oh, they did a lot of building. My father's side, they did a lot of building. When they moved from Kaua'i to Honolulu—remember, Honolulu was just growing, so they had lot of work. I know my father had something to do with building the [Honpa] Hongwanji temple.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: So you were talking about the other occupations.

MS: The work over there?

WN: Mm hmm.

MS: Oh, one of the basic people that lived in our area was the blacksmith. He made the horseshoes, and he changed the shoes for the horses. Because I told you, those days, not cars, yeah? Horses. One [occupation] was that type.

WN: What was his name?

MS: Miwa.

WN: Oh Miwa, okay. So that's the Ralph Miwa . . .

MS: Father.

WN: Yeah, father.

MS: And they were living over there together, see?

WN: I see.

MS: Now the others. . . .

WN: So a lot of them were like businesses?

MS: Yeah. There was one Sawai, painter.

WN: Sawai, yeah.

MS: They ran that Sawai painting contractors.

WN: That's the brothers, yeah?

MS: The brother was running, but the father was the one that started. Bernard was the oldest one. So, who else was there now? Oh, the one I told you, my uncle, Uyeda. And that man was a sharp man, you know. When he came here, he didn't have the contract with any plantation. After my parents moved to Honolulu, he came, stayed with them. And he went into the hack business. And most of his customers were Hawaiians. So he took them from home to market, market to home. The wife was a hard worker. They had two sons, both of them became dentists. But the wife, really hard worker. She looked around for job, any kind of job, she would do. The father was smart. When he came, all they knew was Japanese, yeah? He didn't learn English. He learned to speak Hawaiian. Because most of his customers were Hawaiian. And through these Hawaiians, he saved money, and he bought land. In fact, the piece of property that I'm living on now, he sold that to me. He had a piece, 20,000 square feet, he sold me half of it. He bought it at ten cents a square foot. He sold it to me for seventy-five cents a square foot. He made money, but the thing is, that was way, way below the selling price. I was happy to get it at that time. And that's 1952. Today, they gone way, way up. And that wasn't the only property. He bought property here, there, Kaka'ako, okay? Kept on buying property. When he died, they were living up Twelfth Avenue, Kaimukī. The property that they were on was roughly about 25,000 square feet. That's a big piece of property.

WN: Wow.

MS: The daughter-in-law still lives there but that land is going to be given to the grandson. So right there alone, you can see how much money. But actually, he was smart because he invested in land over here. So he lived over there in back over there. So that's Miwa, Taniguchi, Ueoka. The rest of them were more or less steady working for my father. And then they had another man that lived in Kalihi who was the architect. He drew the plans for my father. And then Sawai was the painter that did all the painting with them. So. . .

WN: What about your father? Did he own the land that he was on?

MS: No, over there was lease land. But later, they bought the land over here, on School Street. They had a big piece of property on School Street, but in 1929, when the depression came, he couldn't pay the mortgage, so we had to sell them the rest of the land. And they kept a small piece over there. When Pālama Settlement moved to this present location, we moved up with it.

WN: Oh, you moved, too?

MS: Yeah.

WN: How come?

MS: Because our lease, downtown property, was up. But before that, we were at the property that my father built—some rental units over there—with second-hand lumber. And those units were

there until about six, seven years ago. So they had it for quite a few years.

WN: So what school did you go to?

MS: Ka'iulani School through the eighth grade and McKinley [High School]. Because they had no other public high school. Anyway, class of '30, so 1926 I guess, to 1930. McKinley High School.

WN: You grad in 1930?

MS: Yeah, I graduated in 1930. Then University of Hawai'i. Two years and I rested. And then two years more. So I graduated in 1935 instead of 1934, graduated 1935.

WN: What was your major?

MS: I didn't know until my junior year. (WN laughs.) Agriculture.

WN: Agriculture. Okay, so you folks, right about when Pālama moved from the old [King and Liliha] location to the present [Vineyard] location [in 1925], you folks moved, yeah? So where did you folks move to when Pālama Settlement moved?

MS: Pālama Settlement was on Vineyard Street, yeah? And came up towards School Street. We moved from School Street [to] right in front of St. Theresa Church. There's an empty piece now over there.

WN: On . . .

MS: School Street.

WN: School Street. Yeah, okay.

MS: That still belongs to us. Not us, to the Sugiharas and Uyedas. The Uyedas have one-fourth share in it.

WN: So how would you compare living at the new place compared to the old place?

MS: Well, it was harder. Because you had to walk from School Street to King Street to go to Ka'iulani for the elementary school. Then you got to catch the bus to go to McKinley. But it wasn't bad. It wasn't too bad because from there, the guys that I knew at Nishikiya, some of them lived on School Street near. . . . What the name of that street over there? Anyway, just little ways down, and this was all insane asylum. Didn't go out weeknights, but Friday night, Saturday night, the boys would gather. Oh, maybe about half a dozen or so would gather over there. And there was a Filipino boy that was a very good musician. He'd listen to a song and then he'd pick it up on his ukulele or guitar and there were other boys that were interested in music. And there was Masao Abe. He was also interested in music and he picked it up from this Filipino boy. Blackie Gabriel.

WN: Blackie Gabriel?

- MS: Yeah, but this Masao Abe was so interested, that when he got out of high school, he joined either Hawaiian Airlines or Aloha Airlines, that musical group. And you know, they went out wherever they had entertainment to do. So for many years, when they had that show, Waikīkī Park, they had the hula show, like that. He would be over there playing music too. So that became his life work. Masao Abe. But anyway, we used to go over there on Saturday night, like that. They would stay there. And then, oh come about eleven, twelve o'clock, it all broke up to go home. So in my case, from here to over there, it took me maybe twenty minutes to walk. But no trouble because you sitting down over there, there was a taxi stand over there and then he didn't have it enclose, so we could stay there. If it rained, we went into the stand. And that was good over there.
- WN: So you were about teenager when you folks moved?
- MS: When we moved over there, no, I was still—yeah, I guess so, yeah. Because I remember going back to Ka'iulani School. . . . Even before that though, I think. Because we were still buying saving stamps. World War I.
- WN: Okay.
- MS: Those were the last few years that they were still selling stamps.
- WN: Okay, so you were younger then.
- MS: Yeah.
- WN: When you moved. And your father kept the business when they moved?
- MS: No, the business closed up, but the contracting still went on.
- WN: Oh, I see. The store closed.
- MS: Until he died. But it wasn't long after we moved up that he died, you know. Because I remember when I was a freshman at McKinley, he died.
- WN: About mid-1920s then, he passed away.
- MS: Yeah, I think about 1923 or '24 he died.
- WN: So what was the new Pālama Settlement like for you?
- MS: It was a nice place. At least we were welcome. The other place, we couldn't go in because they didn't have facilities to take care of the members and stuff like that. Because the upstairs was [the Rath family] home. And the only available thing that they had for recreation was swimming and we weren't permitted to go in there.
- WN: How come?
- MS: It wasn't set up to accommodate the younger people I think.

WN: Oh yeah?

MS: Yeah. Because, anyway, the pier was so close we'd rather go to the ocean, I mean to the pier to swim.

WN: What pier?

MS: Pier 16 and 17, I think. And the Pālama boys and the Kaka'ako boys used to go diving for money. Whenever passenger ships came in.

WN: You did that?

MS: Once or twice, but I couldn't keep up with them. The way they go down to the, almost to the bottom to get the money, boy. Wow. But otherwise, the new Pālama Settlement became really organized. Then they had games, they had schedule for swimming, schedule to use the gym. They had classes, yeah, I remember. When I was in high school there, they had dancing classes. Ballroom dancing and other forms of dancing like the Virginia Reel, things like that.

WN: Square dancing?

MS: Square dancing, yeah.

WN: Let me turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: So you were saying that the new Pālama Settlement was much more organized because they had . . .

MS: Oh yeah.

WN: All were welcomed.

MS: And not only that, they had a Mr. Field who came to Pālama from East Coast as sort of the administrator over there. Mr. [James A.] Rath was the big boss, but Mr. Field was the one that took care of the different programs over there. Then they had this guy, took care of the physical education side, McKillop. Yeah, I remember him, McKillop. Fields was a tall skinny guy, glasses, moustache. And we nicknamed him, Ichabod Crane. (WN chuckles.) Yeah, I remember that.

Then on the physical side, besides McKillop, we had the local boys. Anthony Ah Sam, Wilder Parker, and people like that. Asam took care of the boys in the gym and Wilder Parker took care of the boys, swimming and all that. And he developed swimming teams. And that's where you had Solomon "Red" Raymond.

WN: Solomon was his first name? Real name?

MS: Solomon ["Red"] Raymond. Anyway, he was one of the best basketball players at that time. He played at McKinley. He played about the same time that Soo Sun Kim and Johnny Sur played. Both Johnny Sur and Soo Sun Kim played for McKinley and later on they played for University of Hawai'i. And they had adult basketball teams that participated in certain leagues that they had. Basketball. Don't recall too many of the players. Oh, John Pu'uloa was one of them.

WN: John Kuloa?

MS: Pu'uloa.

WN: Pu'uloa.

MS: Pu'uloa. Yeah, he was one.

WN: So what did you participate in mostly, when you were . . .

MS: Over there?

WN: Right, yeah.

MS: Football, and then swimming. I loved swimming over there.

WN: So you didn't go too much to the piers anymore?

MS: We didn't have to because got the swimming pool over there, yeah? But every so often, Wilder Parker would prepare us for citywide swimming meets. And I remember one very well, that we participated in and that was held at the [Waikīkī] Natatorium. Another one I think that I remember was at the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], swimming. That prepared quite a few of the boys for later swimming, you know. Masuto Fujii, yeah. Masuto Fujii was good, swimming. Others that would develop was like, Cupie Yamamoto. . . .

WN: Who was the coach?

MS: Wilder Parker. Well actually, he was the supervisor. "You this, do this. Go practice, go practice." like that. But they weren't able to teach you how many strokes to do and so on. Not the sophisticated kind that, like later on, [Soichi] Sakamoto. But they did their best, they'd help. But one thing though, the field that they had was oh big difference, boy. A regular football field could fit in there.

WN: Was it hundred yards?

MS: Easy, easy, easy. But the freeway came in and took away more than half of that.

WN: So you continued to play barefoot football?

MS: Over there at Pālama. I played over there until. . . . I was active over there, but by active I

mean, I used to go there quite often until 1935. That's when I graduated [from UH] and got assigned a teaching job on Kaua'i. Then, since I started working for thirteen years on Kaua'i, hardly ever got back to Pālama since then.

WN: I see. So what were some of the coaches and leaders like?

MS: Hmm?

WN: What were they like? You know, people like Wilder Parker? What kind of people were they? Were they kind, strict?

MS: They had their compassion. You see, there were so many kids over there. You had to be careful, because too many accidents on the swimming pool. They could be running around the swimming pool, slip, crack their heads, and so on. So at times, it looked as if, to me, at that time, he was a mad man, boy. (WN chuckles.) But then, he had reasons for it, when you come to think about it. But when it came to swimming, he would stop everybody else, he would set a time. "Okay, all the guys that are going to practice, from here to here. Time." He wouldn't supervise, he'd just say, "Okay, you guys go so many laps. How fast or how slow, doesn't matter, but you go so many laps." I mean, they had no training as coaches, so all they did was, okay, what they thought, yeah? So basketball or football, [Anthony] Ah Sam used to help coach football. He must have played when he was at St. Louis. Because we had to run around the field several times to develop. That one was a little bit more professional-like I would say. Because you running around that field, you finish, okay, sprints. Then we had blocking bags. You hit the blocking bags. They even had a blocking machine. So the actual coaching, even this guy, McKillop, he just supervised, looked around. He didn't actually coach any of us. He was more the physical education type. But they didn't have the weight rooms or things like that. It became a changed place though. They even had a pool room over there. No paying, but it was well supervised, everybody orderly. And I think one thing too, that although the boys, the menfolk who were there working, weren't actually coaches, they tried to keep the young people on the right track.

WN: Yeah, I'm wondering too, you know, you folks come from this area, have a reputation for kind of a tough area, did they have problems with you folks, disciplinewise? Did you folks cause trouble?

MS: I know one time we had. This was a gang fight between Pauoa boys and Nishikiya boys. And the gang fight occurred on Beretania Street just past River [Street]. Just past River, there's a lane that goes down to the left. And they had a theater over there. They called that [area] Tin Can Alley. But anyway, right on Beretania Street, somehow or other, I don't know what the cause of the fight was, but somebody says, "Okay, we're going meet these guys over there. Guys, get ready." So they all got ready, they went down, police came and stopped them but they didn't arrest anybody. But they stopped the fight right there on the main street. Right out in the open. So that's about the only fight that I know of. But I know of other fights that involved the older boys, when we were smaller, that involved Kalihi and Pālama, Kaka'ako and Pālama, like that. But those days, the only weapon that they used were picket fence, you know the fence, they come down, like that?

WN: Yeah.

MS: Some of them would just whip 'em open, use that to hit, yeah?

WN: Yeah.

MS: They didn't use knives or pistols or things like that. And yet, the next time, they meet on the football field.

(Laughter)

MS: Yeah.

WN: What if you miss practice or something? Was there discipline or anything?

MS: No, no. I've never seen anything like that because as far as we were concerned, Nishikiya, we had one of the older boys as coaches and he would draw plays for us, nothing fancy, all through-right tackle, through-left tackle, center, pass, so.

(Laughter)

MS: But when we got to the 135-pounders, then you had more discipline. But I don't think we had any problem, because they all wanted to play, yeah? I know that Tomita family . . .

WN: Hmm, Elmo.

MS: Not Elmo, the older one. Jimmy Tomita. Swanny Tomita folks. Elmo played only in the 120. I don't think he played 130 and above. But Jimmy Tomita played in the 130 and above. And Desha Lane, at the end of Desha Lane, there was a little store over there, Honda Store. And the boy over there, Bear Honda. Ho, the rugged guy. He played for Pālama too. And those guys played for the 150-pound. But disciplinewise, no, I don't think they had any problem of that nature.

WN: Did you folks have uniforms?

MS: No. I told you, even in a 135, 150, [only] sailor hat.

(Laughter)

WN: You didn't wear the same color shirt or anything like that?

MS: No, nobody to sponsor, yeah? The only thing that matched probably were the *sailor moku* pants that we wore. And the opposing team, same thing. Yeah. But later on, I think I did see the long-sleeved shirts were different color. Pālama was red, see? Red and white.

WN: But more or less, you just wear what you had?

MS: Right, yeah. Some of the boys had their parents sew pads of cloth together and use them at the hip, yeah? But those were all homemade, not like the kind that they have now.

WN: So this was tackle football, yeah?

MS: Oh yeah. Tackle football.

WN: Did people get hurt?

MS: A lot of people got hurt. I remember one case, Kalihi [vs.] Pālama. This guy on the opposing team, Chinese, tall, skinny fellow. Good runner. So somehow or other, the coach didn't say anything, but somehow or other, the boys got together and say, "Let's aim for that guy." And sure enough, the guy was standing and one of the guys went straight to him. Hit him right in the face. They had to take him out because he lost three of his front teeth. And that's how it was. And that's where that sailor hat came in handy.

(Laughter)

WN: Doesn't help that much, yeah?

MS: Really hard, yeah? He knock out three full-grown adult teeth.

WN: Yeah. So you had swimming, football. Did you play basketball?

MS: A little bit. Yeah. I want to tell you something though, interesting. When we were with Nishikiya, we also got together either Friday or Saturday night. And there was a bakery on King Street near the Kokea Homes, Holly Bakery. At nine o'clock, the bread came out of the oven, hot. So we would chip in, fifteen cents or twenty cents. You buy a block of butter and one loaf of bread. So if you pay twenty cents, that would be forty cents for the loaf plus that. And then you cut that in half [lengthwise], put the whole block of butter inside, cut that in half, and each guy would have half a loaf hot bread. Ho, that was so delicious, boy. But you had to save to get that.

WN: How much was that?

MS: Twenty cents, I think a loaf was about thirty or forty cents a loaf, yeah? And then . . .

WN: That sounds expensive.

MS: Oh yeah. But at that time, remember this is way, way back now. This is in the late 1920s.

Well, I got to be running too, yeah?

WN: Oh, okay. Do you think we can continue some, another time?

MS: Why, you got some more to ask?

WN: Yeah, yeah. I do.

MS: What?

WN: So anyway, I'll turn it off.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay, I talked you into a little while more. (Chuckles)

MS: Okay, go ahead.

WN: Little bit more. Yeah, so we were talking about, yeah, the barefoot football. . . . Okay, so when you went to McKinley, did you play sports?

MS: I played junior basketball for Hluboky.

WN: For what? Oh, Frank.

MS: Frank Hluboky.

WN: Oh, okay.

MS: Yeah.

WN: Uh huh. What is junior basketball?

MS: Well, you get your senior and then you got your, JV [junior varsity], yeah?

WN: Oh, yeah, yeah. What about football? Did you play?

MS: No. No. I played at the university, same thing. JV for [Luke] Gill. He was a good coach though, Gill.

WN: JV basketball?

MS: Yeah. Couldn't make it, too slow and not enough height. (WN chuckles.) But on the other hand, Soo Sun Kim and Johnny Sur folks, small as they are, they were fast and accurate. But they were good. But compared to the kids now, big difference. The technique that they use, the way they dribble and so on.

WN: Yeah. So when you went to University [of Hawai'i], what did you want to do? What did you want to be?

MS: Well, I took a general course because actually, I didn't know what I wanted. My oldest brother wanted me to be an engineer but with all the math courses, kind of rough. I had a hard time the first two years. That's why I left for one year. So I decided I go into teaching, but not the regular one. I was interested in using my hands. So at the university I worked up at the university farm and I got used to the animals and the routine that they had up there. It was interesting I thought, from here, city boy, going up into farming community. Look kind of difficult, but once you get adapted to it, you know, not too bad. Oh, the experiences that I had with agriculture was really, really interesting. Reading, studying on the side. For instance, caponizing, taking the testicles out of the cockerel so that they would mature bigger and become tastier. Learned to do it with electricity. And you get your chickens that were going to grow up to maybe six or seven pounds, when you caponize them, they get to be ten to thirteen pounds. And at the end of one year, they still just as tender as ever. Those are the kind of things that I started and tried to teach to the students. Grafting, air layering, depending on

what community you were in.

Like for instance, when I started at Kekaha, the war [World War II] came along. And when the war came along, shipping stopped and you couldn't get feed for the chickens. So the people had to eat the chickens and couldn't raise any more chickens. But they need some supplement. So I got a pair of rabbits, male and female, from the university, bred them, and as soon as I had a litter, I gave my good students a pair. As soon as they bred their pair and got litters, they returned one pair. That one pair, I gave them to another. So in a short time, quite a few of the families were raising rabbits. But I took it up with the plantation to get the permit to let them raise the rabbits, because if you let them out and they got wild, they would be eating the sugarcane. So there, we, they saw that there was a need for it. So we raised rabbits over there, taught them how to kill the rabbits, and they enjoyed that. So you see, those are the kind of things that really kept me interested in going into that.

WN: But you know, you're city boy, you had no real background in agriculture, yeah? How did you decide to go . . .

MS: Except, except that at one time while I was still growing up in Pālama, I mean down by King and *da kine*, the sugar workers went on strike.

WN: Oh. . . .

MS: Yeah, long time ago. It wasn't a union thing, but they went on strike. They asked us to go and help. So I think we worked for about two weeks and the strike was over. But they picked us up in the morning, we had our lunch going out there and our main job was weeding.

WN: Where, now where did you go to work?

MS: Pu'uloa.

WN: Pu'uloa?

MS: Just beyond Moanalua. That was all sugar land, you know. Wasn't too far away.

WN: This is what, 'Aiea plantation?

MS: I don't know what plantation it was at that time, but this is when I was only about eight or nine, I guess. So roughly about 1918.

WN: Yeah, yeah.

MS: Yeah, even younger than that, I think. But they needed the help that time. So that was the only experience except during the time that I worked at the university on the farm, milking cows, feeding pigs. But in fact, lot of the people that went out to teach ag[riculture] were city boys. Some experience.

WN: So you lived on Kaua'i for . . .

MS: Lived on Kaua'i for thirteen years. Except three years while I was in the [U.S.] Army.

WN: Oh. And then after Kaua'i, where did you go?

MS: Well, that's where my teaching experience really expanded. Two years at Kalākaua [Intermediate School]. Kalākaua is supposed to be a rough school, but you know, in teaching, you had your own philosophy, you learn some things. I learned that if you're fair with the kids, treat everybody equally, you get the respect of the kids. Well, I notice that our farm area was located near the housing area over there. And the kids cut a hole in the fence instead of going around and coming through the gate, they came through the hole in the fence. And they would stop by where I had my tool shed. And later on, checking, I could see where the ground had been leveled. They were shooting craps over there. So one day I went early, lock myself in the tool room, overlooking where they would be shooting craps, not saying anything, not making any noise, I was taking pictures of what they were doing. When the bell rang, they all disappeared, I came out. Then at that time at Kalākaua, we had a Chinese person who was teaching photography. So he developed that for me, he made it into eight-by-ten [photos] and half a dozen of these. So couple days later, I put that on my bulletin board. I said, "Oh, boys, look!"

Came to look, "Ohh!"

Said, "This will go to the principal if there's any more crap game back there." No more crap game after that. (WN chuckles.) But they appreciate that I got the evidence but I'm holding it, but they cooperate by leaving that area alone.

WN: Right, right.

MS: It didn't stop them from gambling, but it stopped them from gambling where I don't want them to.

WN: Yeah.

(Laughter)

MS: Then from there, I went to Castle High School. Castle High School was good. It was relatively new school. Somebody else was there before me, but I got along very well over there.

WN: How many years were you at Castle?

MS: About five years. But during that five years, again, I learned something else. I raised chickens when I was on Kaua'i, but when I got to Castle High School—at Kalākaua, we had chickens already, so that was okay. But at Castle High School, we didn't have chickens, so we raised chickens, we made new type of chicken coops where the egg would roll down and feeding automatic and so on. We also raised two pigs. We used the feed from the cafeteria. So we raised two pigs, one for the boys and one for the cafeteria. When the pigs were ready, we had the pigs slaughtered, delivered to the cafeteria. The other one, talked to the principal, and we had the end-of-year luau. We cooked our own, made our own (*kālua*) [pig]. The parents have to make the other things. So every year, we were doing that. Then because the property was so big, we (parcel the area), put post tents, and those boys that had cattle at home, we gave them permit to put the cattle in that area so they could see, supervise, so on. But that was later on. That was good.

After five years, I moved to Farrington [High School]. (I) stayed at Farrington from 1955 to 1965. Again, it was a good experience. Well, in the meantime, when I came back from the army, they asked me to join the [Hawai'i] National Guard because they needed officers. I had received a field commission when I was in India. And when I came back, I was a second lieutenant. When they asked me to join the National Guard, they promoted me to captain. So I stayed with the National Guard over there. When I moved to Honolulu, they found a space for me in Honolulu at the National Guard. Those days we were drilling on Monday nights, every Monday night (seven o'clock to nine o'clock P.M.) we would be drilling. So I stayed with them, took over our infantry company. When I moved here, it was 1948. That time, all in the National Guard. Then in 1965, the National Guard people asked me if I wanted a job as the training officer. And this was a state job. So from state teaching position, I transferred to the state Department of Defense.

WN: Oh, I see. So after Farrington, you stopped teaching and went into defense.

MS: From 1965, I moved into that.

WN: How did you feel getting out of teaching?

MS: Well, I didn't see any more future for me, yeah? In teaching. Because I didn't apply for principalship, I wasn't happy there.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

MS: So I liked the idea of moving there, but it was kind of rough because I was the G3 training officer and I didn't have enough personnel to work under me. I took care of (drawing up the directive) for training for all army National Guard. So I asked for help, I couldn't get any help. I developed ulcers, so finally, 1969, I resigned. I had my operation for ulcers, they took part of my stomach out. And I was again, getting more stressed, so I resigned. When (in) 1969, I got out I (worked for) my friend, (a) politician, I worked for him for seven years, only during the session. The rest of the time I was retired. But again, it was interesting, you learn.

You know, it's interesting, as I say, in agriculture for instance, I moved to Castle High School in 1952 and in teaching ag, we had the Future Farmers [of America] organization in agriculture. And every year, the Future Farmers, statewide-wise, had contests going on. Developing agricultural projects and things like that. I remember castrating calves, male calves. The old way was, you pull the scrotum down, cut it, pull it up, the testicles hang down, and you scrape the cord, and then just put disinfectant and leave it alone, see? That was the old way. The new way was to use a rubber band, pull the scrotum down, get the rubber band up above it, leave it like that. Cuts the circulation. And when it cuts the circulation, that whole thing dies and drops off. See, those were the kind of things that we were teaching the kids at the demonstration. One of the new contests that they had was parliamentary procedure. You had to teach the kids parliamentary procedure so they could demonstrate how they would run a meeting. And that's how I got interested in that.

And during that time, from 1952 or '53, they had an association over here. Hawai'i State Association of Parliamentarians. Dr. Rex Parker was the instructor. And we joined. At that time, the doctors and dentists were in the formative position, formative area for their own medical associations. So they were interested in it, too. And I was interested because I had to

teach my kids. So I joined the group, and even until today, I'm a member of the Hawai'i State Association [of Parliamentarians]. I'm a charter member, I'm a life member, so I don't pay (dues). I don't go to the meetings because I don't drive at night. But that association, local association, grew and we became affiliated with the national association, National Association of Parliamentarians. That association tests prospective parliamentarians and they grade them. So fortunate for me, I studied with Rex Parker, took the exam, I became a professional registered parliamentarian. So I told you I worked at the legislature and when the 1978 Constitutional Convention came around, Bill [William W.] Paty, [Jr.] was the president. The guy I worked for was Bob Taira. He asked me to come join them, so I went, I became their parliamentarian. So I was the parliamentarian at the Con-Con.

WN: Oh, is that right?

MS: Yeah. So it's interesting. And now I held, like over here, give them basic classes in parliamentary procedure. I just finished about three weeks ago, giving a basic class to the Hongwanji Mission clubs. I'm scheduled to be parliamentarian at the United Church of Jesus Christ. They're having their convention at Kamehameha [Schools], June 4th and 5th. Then this morning, HGEA [Hawai'i Government Employees Association] called me, they want me to be parliamentarian for their convention, May 27, 28, 29. So you see, it's rewarding to have started these things . . .

WN: Sure, it keeps you busy, too. It's a valuable skill.

MS: It's a lot of fun. Especially during the Con-Con, it was fun, because you could see the pros and cons and one faction against the other.

WN: That's the one that [John] Waihee was in, yeah?

MS: He was in that convention, yeah. Lot of the present legislators were in that.

WN: Right, right, right.

MS: I think, what's his name now? Tom Okamura was in it.

WN: Tom Okamura?

MS: Yeah, he was in that too. Frenchie DeSoto used to come and watch all the time.

WN: One more question.

MS: Okay.

WN: You know, here we are in Pālāma, you know, you live, I guess you come to this area a lot now. And you know, you've gone through so much, you grew up in Pālāma, went to Pālāma Settlement, how would you compare those days in Pālāma and Pālāma Settlement to today? What are the differences?

MS: Well you know, I went to Pālāma Settlement recently during the last two years. Couple of times, I think. The program has really grown, you know? The program has really grown. And

lot of the people that go over there, the seniors that go over there, also come over here. We're talking to them, they have classes over there that we'd never had before. So although I'm not active there anymore, from what I hear, they're really improved. And when I did visit over there, I looked at the facilities that they had now, the gym is about the same size, the swimming pool looks good, but where they have their lunch cafeteria and things like that. Ho, they never had it like that before. And the space that they have for the different classes, well I think that's terrific now. And those that go and take advantage there are the smart ones, I think. But you can't, unless the person is willing to go and try, yeah? Same thing over here. Until you came and see what's going on, you don't know what to do here. So I think that, from my observation, I think they've really come a great ways from Pālama.

WN: Well okay, thank you very much for your time.

MS: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

Reflections of Pālama Settlement

Volume I

**Center for Oral History
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August 1998